

Alonzo Roberson House (now the Roberson Memorial)  
30 Front Street  
Binghamton  
Broome County  
New York

HABS No. NY-5545

HABS  
NY  
4-BING  
23-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NY-5545

ALONZO ROBERSON HOUSE  
(now the ROBERSON MEMORIAL)

Location: 30 Front Street, Binghamton, Broome County, New York.

Present Owner: Roberson Memorial, Inc.

Present Occupant: Broome County Historical Society and Roberson Center.

Present Use: Exhibits, library, meeting rooms.

Brief Statement of Significance: An early twentieth century Italian Renaissance Revival mansion whose style is indicative of the extravagant taste of a turn of the century businessman.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Original and subsequent owners:  
About 1870, Lawrence O'Day owned the lot and constructed a frame house on it. In 1904, Alonzo Roberson purchased the O'Day lot, demolished the house, and in 1905-1906, constructed the present house. In October, 1954, Roberson Memorial Center opened in the building.

2. Date of erection: 1905-1906.

3. Architect: Edward Vosbury.

- B. Historical Events and Persons Associated with the Structure:  
Mr. Alonzo Roberson was a wealthy lumberman and owner of Roberson Lumber Company in Johnson City. He died in 1934 and his widow died in 1953. The estate then passed to Roberson Memorial, Inc., for the creation of a community cultural center.

## C. Sources of Information:

1. Old Views: Photographs of building and grounds on file with Roberson Center and Broome County Historical Society.
2. Bibliography
  - a. Primary and unpublished sources:  
Chace, Paul G. Roberson Center Architecture, Some Architectural History Notes. (typescript).  
Binghamton. Broome County Historical Society. 1973.

- b. Secondary and published sources:  
Montillon, Eugene D. Historic Architecture in Broome County, New York and Vicinity. Broome County Planning Department, Broome County Historical Society. Binghamton, New York. January, 1972.

- D. Likely Sources not yet Investigated:  
Blueprints and original interior wall details on file with Broome County Historical Society.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Italian Renaissance Revival.
2. Condition of fabric: Excellent.

### B. Description of the Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: 95' x 104'.
2. Number of stories: Three.
3. Foundations: Dressed stone.
4. Wall construction: Red brick with white limestone; Indiana bluestone trim.
5. Structural system: Steel beam with masonry.
6. Porches, stoops, bulkheads, etc.: Columnated, semi-circular front porch, columnated rear porch. (Columnated driveway porch removed in 1954.)
7. Windows: Tiffany-style colored glass windows in most rooms; Tiffany sky-lights.
8. Roof: Low hip roof.

### C. Description of the Interior:

#### 1. Floor plans:

##### a. First Floor:

Main Hall: The ceilings have rolled gold coverings. However, when the house was repaired and renovated in 1953-1954, the center section of the hall ceiling

ALONZO ROBERSON HOUSE  
(now the ROBERSON MEMORIAL)  
HABS No. NY-5545 (Page 3)

was so badly damaged that the gold could not be restored and acoustical tile was installed. The ceiling fixtures were the same and were designed by Tiffany.

**Living Rooms:** The original woodwork was Circassian. Walnut and the walls were covered with a heavy gold damask. For the present, false walls have been installed to mount the materials from the Metropolitan Museum. At a later date this room will be brought back to its original state.

**Parlor:** Fully restored and decorated with appropriate local furniture, mainly from the home of Lamont M. Bowers, formerly at 203 Main Street.

**Dining Room:** The wood is Dominican Mahogany. This room was constructed in Buffalo by master craftsmen and brought here for installation. The ceilings have painted canvases--a rarity in this area. The side light fixtures have been replaced as well as the ceiling fixture. The original fixtures were wired for gas and electricity. Shutters have been added. The table and chairs were designed for the room and are the original set. The Binghamton Garden Club has donated funds for the restoration of the room in 1974-1975.

**Den:** Closed to the public and converted to curator's offices.

**Breakfast Room:** Now used to exhibit the Kroehler collection of Royal Worcester Doughty Porcelain Birds.

**Kitchen and Butler's Pantry:** Closed to the public and converted to offices. The kitchen is back of the dining room.

**Stairway:** A grand symmetrical divided flight staircase with open well is lighted by three large Tiffany colored glass windows.

b. **Second Floor:**

Formerly the bedroom suite of Mr. and Mrs. Roberson. These rooms have been converted to house the Broome County Historical Collections, and a small library. Three small rooms in the rear were the servants' quarters, but are now used in theater productions.

- D. Site and Surroundings: Blueprints of 1916 show the planned addition of a greenhouse, fences and a formal garden on the south and east of the mansion. The original property owned by the Roberson family runs along Front Street for 166 feet and is 460 feet deep. The property abuts the Chenango River.

Work is continuing on the grounds and to date, money for plantings has been contributed by the Binghamton Garden Club, Roberson Garden Center and its affiliated garden clubs. It is the hope that one day the grounds will become a focal point of outstanding landscape design and an outdoor museum of gardening.

### PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

These records are part of the documentation of structures in the Southern Tier of New York State, undertaken by HABS in cooperation with the Broome County Historical Society and the Valley Development Foundation, Inc.

The project was under the general supervision of John Poppeliers, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey. The historical material was prepared by Clement G. Bowers, June, 1963 and Paul G. Chace, August, 1973. Photographs were taken by Jack E. Boucher in March, 1963. The project was edited for deposit in the Library of Congress by Constance Werner Ramirez, November, 1974.